

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-N02-2015-017-EA**

Alkali Well Pipeline Extension

June 2015

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Colorado
Kremmling Field Office
2013 E. Park Ave, PO Box 68
Kremmling, CO 80459

BLM



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Identifying Information

Project Title: Alkali Well Pipeline Extension

Legal Description: Jackson County, Colorado.

T. 9 N., R. 80 W., Sec. 5, 6th P.M.

Applicant: Silver Spur Ranches

NEPA Document Number: DOI-BLM-N02-2015-017

Casefile/Project Number: Project #018094

1.2. Background

In 2014, Alkali Well was redeveloped with a solar pump installed to provide water in allotment #07018. The new pump yields an average of 2.5 to 3 gpm of water. The permittee (Silver Spur Ranches) has asked if a pipeline could be constructed from the existing well to the adjacent allotment (#7052). This would deliver water to the upland area of allotment #07052, improving cattle distribution on both the public and private lands. The pipeline extension may also alleviate some grazing pressures on a section of the North Platte River within the allotment.

1.3. Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the proposed project is to create an additional water source in grazing allotment #7052. Currently, livestock primarily water from the North Platte River, resulting in poor grazing distribution across the allotment, as there are few upland water sources. By constructing a pipeline from Alkali Well to Allotment #7052, water tanks can be installed in an upland area, providing additional water and improving livestock distribution. The two allotments are both grazed by Silver Spur and are not grazed concurrently. Allotment #7018 is generally grazed in early June and allotment #7052 is grazed from mid July to early August.

1.4. Decision to be Made

Based on the analysis contained in this EA, the BLM will decide whether to approve or deny the proposed Alkali Well Pipeline Extension, and if so, under what terms and conditions. Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the BLM must determine if there are any significant environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action warranting further analysis in an

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Field Manager is the responsible officer who will decide one of the following:

- To approve the Alkali Well Pipeline Extension with design features as submitted;
- To approve the Alkali Well Pipeline Extension with additional mitigation added;
- To analyze the effects of the Proposed Action in an EIS; or
- To deny the Alkali Well Pipeline Extension.

1.5. Conformance with the Land Use Plan

The Proposed Action is subject to and is in conformance (43 CFR 1610.5) with the following land use plan:

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP), Record of Decision (ROD)

Date Approved: December 19, 1984; Updated February 1999

Decision Number/Page: Livestock Grazing, pages 6 through 8, as revised.

Decision Language: Investing in cost-effective range improvements (primarily through public investment) to implement grazing systems and meet the specific objectives of AMP's.

2. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1. Proposed Action

Silver Spur Ranches, the BLM, and the Owl Mountain Partnership are proposing to extend a water pipeline (500-600 feet) from Alkali Well in Allotment #07018 to the adjacent allotment #07052, where two ten foot Bul-Tuf tanks would be installed (see Map). A bulldozer may need to level a 24 by 24 foot pad to create a stable platform for the two tanks. Prior to placing the tanks, a layer of gravel would be spread across the pad or the clearing for the tanks. Silver Spur will install the tanks, which will have wildlife ramps to provide escape routes for small mammals and birds and a drainage system for winterization. The water troughs would be anchored and protected by a wood post and rail structure. A backhoe would be used to dig the pipeline and to anchor the post and rail structure around the associated tanks. Access to the new tank structure is along an existing two track road and would require little to no cross country travel. Construction would occur between July 15 and November 1, 2015.

2.1.1. Design Features

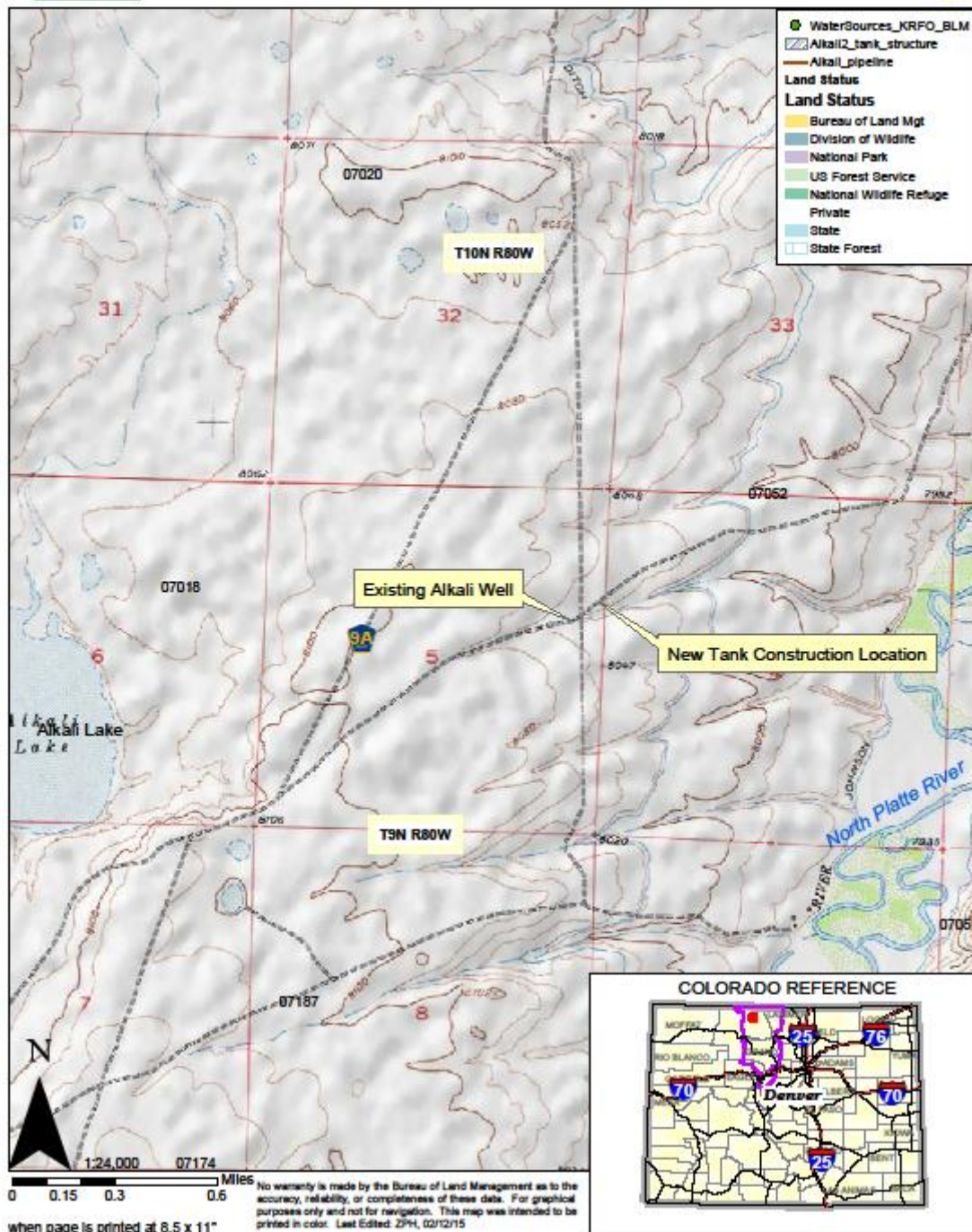
1. The BLM would inspect disturbed areas for noxious weeds for two growing seasons after the project is completed. If noxious weeds are found, it would be the responsibility of the BLM to treat the weed infestations.
2. Weed free gravel would be used by the Permittee to deter any new populations of invasive or noxious plant species being established.
3. All construction equipment must be clean prior to entering the project area to prevent the spread of noxious or invasive species.
4. Specific design criteria of the project will be coordinated with the permittee and BLM personnel before project implementation. A recommended design will be given to the permittee as needed.
5. The BLM will reseed areas of disturbance with a BLM approved seed mix. Seed mix will be determined by BLM personnel at the time of seeding.
6. Construction would occur when clay soils are dry, and vehicles or equipment would not create ruts.
7. Troughs would be located on sandy loam soils and out of the drainage.
8. The topsoil and vegetation would be separated from underlying soils for re-spreading after construction. This would include the area or pad where the trough would be located. The soil surface over the buried pipeline should be left rough, to help prevent runoff from travelling the pipeline. Depending on the location and slope of the pipeline route, water bars should be constructed to keep runoff from travelling the pipeline route.
9. While in use, each internal combustion engine including tractors, trucks, or equivalents, welders, generators, stationary engines, or comparable powered equipment shall be provided with at least the following:
 - a. One fire extinguisher, at least #ABC with an Underwriters Laboratory (UL) rating of 3A - 40BC, or greater. Extinguisher shall be mounted so as to be readily available for use (not locked in a tool box or chained to a seat, for example),
 - b. One shovel
 - c. One axe.
10. The project would be monitored by the Field Office Staff Archaeologist during construction.
11. The livestock troughs would be of neutral color to minimize visual contrast in the area.
12. All new troughs will have appropriate escape ramps installed before they are connected to water.
13. An overflow mechanism would release water approximately 150 feet from the infrastructure to create a saturated soil area where facultative wetland vegetation and

insects can produce and small functional area for broods to visit at an adequate distance from the Proposed Action.

- 14.** A minimum 300 meter radius survey would need to be performed by the KFO biologist to verify presence or absence of this species. In the event that North Park Phacelia is discovered, no surface disturbing activities would take place within a 300 meter buffer from the outer most plant location.



Alkali Well Pipeline Location



2.1.2. Required Conditions of Approval to Mitigate Impacts to Cultural and Paleontological Resources

1. The applicant is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts.
2. If any archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, activity in the vicinity of the discovery will cease, and the BLM KFO Archaeologist will be notified immediately. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The applicant will make every effort to protect the site from further impacts including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage until BLM determines a treatment approach, and the treatment is completed. Unless previously determined in treatment plans or agreements, BLM will evaluate the cultural resources and, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), select the appropriate mitigation option within 48 hours of the discovery. The applicant, under guidance of the BLM, will implement the mitigation in a timely manner. The process will be fully documented in reports, site forms, maps, drawings, and photographs. The BLM will forward documentation to the SHPO for review and concurrence.
3. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the applicant must notify the AO, by telephone and written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), the operator must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the AO.
4. The applicant is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for disturbing or collecting vertebrate or other scientifically-important fossils, collecting large amounts of petrified wood (over 25lbs./day, up to 250lbs./year), or collecting fossils for commercial purposes on public lands.
5. If any paleontological resources are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the applicant or any of his agents must stop work immediately at that site, immediately contact the BLM Paleontology Coordinator, and make every effort to protect the site from further impacts, including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The BLM or designated paleontologist will evaluate the discovery and take action to protect or remove the resource within 10 working days. Within 10 days, the operator will be allowed to continue construction through the site, or will be given the choice of either (a) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for stabilizing the fossil resource in place and avoiding further disturbance to the fossil resource, or (b) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for mitigating impacts to the fossil resource prior to continuing construction through the project area.

2.2. No Action Alternative

In the No Action alternative, an additional livestock water source would not be developed in allotment # 07052 from the existing Alakli Well in Allotment #07018. Beneficial cattle distribution and alleviation of grazing on the North Platte River would not be realized.

3. SCOPING

NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) require that the BLM use a scoping process to identify potential significant issues in preparation for impact analysis. The principal goals of scoping are to identify issues, concerns, and potential impacts that require detailed analysis. Scoping is both an internal and external process.

Internal scoping was initiated when the project was presented to the Kremmling Field Office interdisciplinary team on 02/17/2015.

4. ISSUES

The CEQ Regulations state that NEPA documents “must concentrate on the issues that are truly significant to the action in question, rather than amassing needless detail” (40 CFR 1500.1(b)). While many issues may arise during scoping, not all of the issues raised warrant analysis in an environmental assessment (EA). Issues will be analyzed if: 1) an analysis of the issue is necessary to make a reasoned choice between alternatives, or 2) if the issue is associated with a significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impact, or where analysis is necessary to determine the significance of the impacts. The following sections list the resources considered and the determination as to whether they require additional analysis.

4.1. Issues Analyzed

The following issues were identified during internal scoping as potential issues of concern for the Proposed Action. These issues will be addressed in this EA.

- **Special Status Species:** Currently there are 2 active greater sage grouse lek sites in the vicinity of the proposed action. The closest lek is within is just over 0.6 miles of the proposed trough and pipeline site. The proposed pipeline exists within a 4 mile proximity to several active leks and important nesting and early brood rearing habitats. The Proposed Action would also increase water depletions in the Platte River Basin, which threatens threatened and endangered species.
- **Cultural Resources:** Cultural Resource report BLM # CR-15-24 was conducted under Section 106 of the National historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended and its implementing

regulations. No new sites or previously located sites are within the proposed project area. The proposed action is a **no effect**. There are **no historic properties that would be affected**.

- **Native American Religious Concerns:** Tribal consultation was initiated on April 7, 2015, and to date no tribe has identified any traditional cultural property or religious concerns.

4.2. Issues Considered but not Analyzed

- **Social and Economic Conditions and Environmental Justice:** There would not be any substantial changes to local social or economic conditions. Any minor potential effects from this proposed action, related to minority or low income populations, would be expected to be very small but positive.
- **Prime and Unique Farmlands, Wilderness, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Scenic Byways, ACECs:** None of these areas or designations are within the proposed project area.
- **Visual Resources:** There would be no substantial changes to the Visual Resources due to this proposed action.
- **Wastes, Hazardous and Solid:** There are no quantities of wastes, hazardous or solid, located on BLM-administered lands in the proposed project area, and there would be no wastes generated as a result of the Proposed Action or No Action alternative.
- **Geologic Resources:** There would be no substantial change to the Geologic Resource due to this proposed action.
- **Soil Resources:** The Proposed Action would disturb a very small area of soil and would not measurably affect soil resources. The additional water source could improve overall vegetative condition in allotment #7052, which indirectly benefits soil health. The No Action Alternative would maintain existing soil conditions.
- **Surface and Ground Water Quality:** The Proposed Action would have no direct impacts to surface or ground water quality. Upland water sources, however, are considered best management practices to help improve surface water quality by drawing livestock away from streams. Under the No Action Alternative, the existing conditions would continue.
- **Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Rights:** The Proposed Action does not occur in a floodplain and does not indirectly effect the floodplain or alter flood hazards. There are no identified hydrologic concerns. Water use would be in compliance with the well permit from the state and would not impact any existing water rights.
- **Wetlands and Riparian Zones:** There would be no direct impacts to any wetland or riparian zones. The Proposed Action could indirectly benefit the North Platte River's riparian

zone within allotment #7052, by drawing livestock up into the uplands. The No Action Alternative would maintain existing conditions, and this opportunity to potentially benefit the riparian zone would not be pursued.

- **Aquatic Wildlife:** Impacts to this resource would be immeasurable from the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.
- **Migratory Birds:** This proposed action involves a very small disturbance foot print that would remove habitat or have the potential to “take” migratory birds as defined under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Troughs would provide additional water sources and include escape ramps to minimize take of migratory birds and other small mammals that may become entrapped while the basin is holding water. Pipeline and trough construction would be completed after the primary nesting season of May 15-July 15 to avoid the direct take of individuals, destroying nests, or disrupting breeding behavior in the area. Given these design features, it is unlikely that the proposed action would negatively affect migratory birds or lead populations of species to decline.
- **Terrestrial Wildlife:** Positive impacts are expected given design criteria. Due to the timing, built in escape ramps of troughs, and relatively small project footprint of proposed action, it is unlikely to render any measurable negative affects to terrestrial wildlife. Terrestrial wildlife and their habitat is expected to benefit from the proposed action by improving cattle distribution and thereby improving adjacent riparian conditions.
- **Livestock Grazing:** Current grazing management will remain the same, in which there will be no change in season of use or restrictions applied to current grazing practices. Currently allotment (07052) is permitted for 130 pairs, with a season of use between 07/05/15 to 08/04/15 and 16 AUMS. An addition of a water source may improve cattle distribution within the allotment. (See Vegetation analysis). Utilization studies will be conducted in the future to determine if cattle distribution has increased throughout the allotment. No further analysis is needed.
- **Invasive species:** Currently there are no invasive and or noxious plant species within the project area. See design features for preventative measures to deter the establishment and or spread of invasive species/noxious species.
- **Realty Authorizations:** There are no right-of-ways in the project area. No impacts would occur.
- **Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics:** There are no designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas in the proximity of the proposed project area. The areas do not possess Wilderness Characteristics due to it having permanent impacts to naturalness and its size being less than 5000 acres due to maintained roads in the area. Nor is it of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

- **Recreation:** Existing recreational uses in the general area include hunting, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing; snowmobiling and driving for pleasure. There are no BLM recreation activity plans or other BLM special recreation designations for this area. There would be no impacts from the Proposed Action.
- **Access and Transportation:** Existing primitive roads on BLM-administered lands in the project area are accessed by motorized and non-motorized modes of travel by the general public primarily from County Road 9A. There is no existing travel management plans for the area and all routes are currently open for public use when legally accessible. The new tank construction location is on inventoried route 9A-10-A and is proposed as an Administrative Route for future use which includes use by the grazing lessee for range improvements and management of the allotment. There would be no impacts from the Proposed Action.
- **Noise:** There would be a short term increase in noise from machinery during the construction of the pipeline and tank pad development. The immediate project area has limited public use and is not near private residences. There would be no impacts from the Proposed Action or No Action alternatives.
- **Fire Management:** The purposed action would cause no impacts to fire management. The livestock tanks would most likely only be able to supply a few loads of water for fire suppression efforts, and unlikely to be consider a water supply for prescribe fire due to low volume of water.

5. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

5.1. Vegetation

5.1.1. *Affected Environment:*

The proposed project is located within a mixture of sagebrush with an understory of grasses and forbs. Prominent grasses include bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), bluegrasses (*Poa* spp), fescues (*Festuca* spp), pine needlegrass (*Achnatherum pinetorum*), Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), and bottlebrush squirreltail (*Elymus elymoides*). Forbs include wild buckwheat (*Eriogonim* spp), daisies (*Erigeron* spp), phlox (*Phlox* spp), pussytoes (*Antennaria* spp), and beard tongues (*Penstemon* spp). The project would result in approximately ½ acre of soil and vegetation disturbance.

5.1.2. *Environmental Consequences – Proposed Action*

The proposed action would cause vegetation disturbance during the actual construction process. The disturbance would be limited to access routes, and the tank location area. The disturbance around the pad would be greatest, with some loss of vegetation. Slight to moderate disturbance would continue around livestock tanks due to cattle congregating but would be

limited to a very small area. Other areas including the cross-country travel route to dig pipeline would be minimal. As part of the proposed action, seeding would occur in the areas where vegetation is disturbed by the proposed action. Indirectly the new water source may improve the vegetation conditions in the allotment by improving livestock distribution. Better livestock distribution would prevent livestock from persistently congregating around livestock watering areas like the North Platte River and may improve some vegetative conditions within these areas. Future utilization studies within the allotment will be done to show if increased livestock distribution will improve vegetation conditions overall.

5.1.3. Environmental Consequences – No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative current vegetative conditions throughout the allotment would remain the same and livestock distribution would not be dispersed. Some beneficial vegetation improvements would not be realized.

5.1.4. Mitigation Measures:

None.

5.2. Special Status Animal Species

5.2.1. Affected Environment

The proposed action is located within the North Platte River Basin, which is tributary to the Platte River system. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has determined that any water depletion within the Platte River jeopardizes the continued existence of one or more federally-listed threatened or endangered species and adversely modifies or destroys designated and proposed critical habitat. Depletions may affect and are likely to adversely affect the whooping crane, the interior least tern, the piping plover, the western prairie fringed orchid, and the pallid sturgeon in Nebraska.

Greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*): this BLM sensitive species is currently listed as a candidate species for listing under the endangered species act (ESA) of 1973 and is scheduled to have a formal decision of listing in 2015 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Greater sage-grouse are known to occupy the area of the proposed action year round. The BLM has the authority for conservation of greater sage-grouse through (1) the Federal Land Management Policy Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.: 90 stat. 2743; PL 94-579; (2) the Sikes Act, Title II (16 U.S.C. 670 et seq.), as amended; and (3) the BLM Manual 6840, Special Status Species Management (BLM: sensitive species) while the sage grouse is under review for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (USFWS: candidate species). Specifically, the FLPMA guidance on sensitive species authorizes that “the public lands would be managed in a manner that would protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air, atmospheric, water resource, and archeological values; that, where appropriate, would preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition; that would

provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals...” (43 USC 1701 sec. 102 (a) (8)).

Section 06 (c) of the 6840 manual gives the following guidance on candidate species: “consistent with existing laws, the BLM shall implement management plans to conserve candidate species and their habitats and shall ensure that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by the BLM do not contribute to the need for the species to become listed.” Section 12 of the 6840 manual states: “actions authorized by the BLM shall further the conservation of federally listed and other special status species and shall not contribute to the need to list any special status species under provisions of the ESA, or designate additional sensitive species under the provisions of this policy.” The Department of Interior Fish and Wildlife policy: state-federal relationship (43 CFR part 24.4 (c)) states in part that “...the Secretary of Interior is charged with the responsibility to manage non-wilderness BLM lands for multiple uses, including fish and wildlife conservation. “

Current science regards the lek, or male strutting grounds, as the focal point for the sage grouse life cycle and therefore management efforts. Hagen and others state that 80% of nesting occurs within four miles of a lek site (Hagen et al 2007). Currently there are two active lek sites in the vicinity of the proposed action. The closest lek is within is just over 0.6 miles of the proposed trough and pipeline site. The proposed well action exists within a four mile proximity to several active leks and currently represents important nesting and early brood rearing habitats.

5.2.2. Environmental Consequences – Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP), established in 2006, is implementing actions designed to assist in the conservation and recovery of the target species and their associated habitats along the central and lower Platte River in Nebraska through a basin-wide cooperative approach agreed to by the states of Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. A Programmatic Biological Opinion was completed on June 16, 2006, that covers new depletions, and in 2009, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between the BLM and the USFWS to offset federal new depletions that is consistent with the PRRIP. In 2013, the BLM consulted with the USFWS for the historic use of Alkali Well, and in 2015, consultation on the additional use due to the pipeline was completed. The average annual historic depletion is 0.34 acre-ft. and the new pipeline could add up to 0.27 acre-ft of new depletions.

Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*): Direct effects to this species include removal of a minimal area of nesting and brood rearing habitat and fragmentation of the sagebrush community. This habitat disturbance removes available food and cover for grouse during early life stages. Infrastructure created by the proposed action represents a striking hazard that may result in grouse mortality and avoidance behavior of the immediate vicinity of the project site. The proposed action is outside of the 0.6 mile No Surface Disturbance (NSO)

area that is thought to cause a direct disturbance and should not pose a threat to sage grouse. In addition to this, there is a net decrease of infrastructure in recent years by removing the windmill and replacing it with a solar panel and reducing two tanks to one.

Indirect effects include the use of the proposed infrastructure by raptors and ravens (corvid family) that may lead to an increase in nest predation, brood abandonment and avoidance behavior. Decreases in sagebrush have shown an increase in sage grouse nest predation by ravens and badger (*Taxidea taxus*) (Coates et. al. 2010). Indirect effects may also stem from overall loss of recruitment caused by the above direct effects. These effects would be difficult to measure but are realized over a cumulative standpoint. It is unlikely that the proposed action would move this species and it's populations toward listing under the ESA.

5.2.3. Environmental Consequences – No Action Alternative

There would be no impacts to special status species under this alternative.

5.2.4. Mitigation Measures-

None.

5.3. Special Status Plant Species

5.3.1. Affected Environment

North Park Phacelia (*Phacelia formosula*): is listed as Endangered under the ESA of 1973, it occurs on sandy clay slopes and yellowish to rust-colored sandy soils of the Coalmont Formation common to the project area. Flowering is thought to occur twice a year depending on precipitation in late June through August, and fruiting occurs into October. The nearest known colony of this species exists approximately 1,400 meters from the proposed action.

5.3.2. Environmental Consequences – Proposed Action

North Park Phacelia (*Phacelia formosula*): Due to the proximity to known populations of this species and the typical wind patterns during the time frame of the project; it is possible that indirect fugitive dust may carry over to plant colonies. Dust may have the ability to cover plant tissues and disrupt photosynthetic process needed for growth and reproduction. Although unlikely, plants may exist on or near the project site at which point indirect dust impacts and direct trampling of individuals may occur due to the project.

5.3.3. Environmental Consequences – No Action Alternative

There would be no impacts to special status plant species as a result of this alternative.

5.3.4. Mitigation Measures-

None

5.4. Colorado Standards for Public Land Health

In January 1997, the Colorado BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, special status species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. If there is the potential to impact these resources, the BLM will note whether or not the project area currently meets the standards and whether or not implementation of the Proposed Action would impair the standards.

5.4.1. Standard 1 – Upland Soils

The Proposed Action is located in an allotment that has not been assessed for Standard 1. The project would not impair the allotment's ability to meet the standard and could help improve longterm soil health. The No Action Alternative would not affect the allotment's existing conditions.

5.4.2. Standard 2 – Riparian Systems

The riparian zone is on private land and has not been assessed for the Standard. The Proposed Action could indirectly help benefit the riparian zone within the allotment and would maintain or improve the allotment's ability to meet the Standard. Under the No Action Alternative, the existing conditions would continue. The alternative would not impair the area's ability to meet the Standard.

5.4.3. Standard 3 – Plant and Animal Communities

There are no recent formal reports on this Standard. Based on current conditions, and the previous year's growing season assessment of this and surrounding allotments, it can reasonably be determined that this Standard is being met and that the proposed action would not alter Public Land Health Standard 3.

5.4.4. Standard 4 – Special Status Species

There are no recent formal reports on this Standard. Based on current conditions, and previous year's habitat functionality and stable populations of sage-grouse and North Park Phacelia, it can reasonably be determined that this Standard is being met and that the Proposed Action would not alter Public Land Health Standard 4.

5.4.5. Standard 5 – Water Quality

The allotment has not been assessed for Standard 5, but is tributary to the North Platte River. There are no known water quality concerns for the river and it is considered to be fully

supporting its designated uses. The Proposed Action would maintain or improve the overall watershed conditions in the allotment, helping the allotment meet or move towards meeting the Standard. The No Action Alternative would not impair the allotment's ability to meet the Standard, but would not improve the allotment's condition.

6. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS ANALYSIS

6.1. Analysis Areas

The geographic extent of cumulative impacts varies by the type of resource and impact. The timeframes, or temporal boundaries, for those impacts may also vary by resource. See the specific resource's write-up for the geologic extent.

6.2. Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

Historic uses that continue into the present and reasonable future are primarily livestock grazing. Adjacent private lands have been used for irrigated hay meadows and are likely to continue into the future. There is some recreational use of the existing two track roads in Allotment 7018 that is also likely to continue into the future. Allotment 7052 has only a small amount of BLM lands, with the remainder being private lands, so public use is very limited.

6.3. Cumulative Impacts by Resource

6.3.1. Vegetation

The intent of the project is to improve cattle grazing distribution within allotment #07052. Immediate impacts will only be for a very short term and very little disturbance is expected. Similar water source projects have been constructed in the past and have proven to be beneficial with improvements in cattle distribution. Together these types of projects can benefit vegetative communities by decreasing congregating of cattle around a single source of water, and providing multiple water sources within the allotment. There are no future plans for additional water source development in allotment #7052. .

6.3.2. Migratory Birds, Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife, Special Status Species

Cattle grazing is the only major land use that has occurred in this area in the past and predicted for the foreseeable future. The Proposed Action involves improving cattle grazing distribution within the allotment and alleviates grazing pressure on adjacent riparian areas. This section of the allotment (7052) has 16 AUMs that appear to be adequate to meet the permittee's need while upholding Public Land Health Standards 3 and 4. Anthropogenic influences such as powerline infrastructure are located nearby which pose a strike or electrocution hazard for some avian wildlife. Combined with the Proposed Action, there is not an anticipated increase in the threat to wildlife.

7. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

7.1. Interdisciplinary Review

Table 1. List of Preparers

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Signed
Paula Belcher	Hydrologist	Air Quality; Surface and Ground Water Quality; Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Rights; Soils; Wetland and Riparian Zones	5/27/2015
Bill Wyatt	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources; Native American Religious Concerns; Paleontological Resources	5/28/2015
Darren Long	Biologist	Special Status Plant and Animal Species, Migratory Birds, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Aquatic and Terrestrial Wildlife	4/9/2015
Zach Hughes	Natural Resource Specialist	Vegetation; Invasive, Non-Native Species; Rangeland Management	05/05/15
Kevin Thompson	Fire Management Specialist	Fuels and Fire Management	05/18/15
John Monkouski	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics; Wilderness Study Areas; Recreation; Access and Transportation; Noise; Visual Resources; Scenic Byways	05/11/2015
Kelly Elliott	Natural Resource Specialist	Wastes, Hazardous and Solid; Geology and Minerals	05/08/15
Annie Sperandio	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations	5/22/2015
Zach Hughes	Project Lead	Vegetation; Invasive, Non-Native Species; Rangeland Management	05/29/2015
Susan Valente	Natural Resource Specialist	NEPA Compliance	06/18/2015

7.2. Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted

USFWS- Alkali Lake Well historic depletion - Biological Opinion ES/CO:ES/LK-6-CO-13-F-015 TAILS:06E24000-20130F-0267, Historic.

USFWS- Alkalie Lake Well new depletion, reported to the USFWS on 1/26/2015.

7.3. References

Coates, p. S., and d. J. Delehanty. 2010. Nest predation of greater sage-grouse in relation to microhabitat factors and predators. Journal of wildlife management 74:240–248

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management
Kremmling Field Office
2103 E. Park Ave, Kremmling, CO 80459

Alkali Well Pipeline Extension DOI-BLM-CO-N02-2015-017-EA

Background

In 2014, Alkali Well was redeveloped with a solar pump installed to provide water in allotment #07018. The new pump yields an average of 2.5 to 3 gpm of water. The permittee (Silver Spur Ranches) has asked if a pipeline could be constructed from the existing well to the adjacent allotment (#7052). This would deliver water to the upland area of allotment #07052, improving cattle distribution on both the public and private lands. The pipeline extension may also alleviate some grazing pressures on a section of the North Platte River within the allotment.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the Kremmling Field Office Resource Management Plan, therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

Context

The project is a site-specific action directly involving BLM administered public lands that do not in and of itself have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this Proposed Action:

- 1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.**
- 2. The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety.**

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There are no affected historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas that are in the project area.

4. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

No comments or concerns have been received regarding possible effects on the quality of the human environment during scoping.

5. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.

No highly uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment were identified during analysis of the Proposed Action.

6. Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Proposed Action neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

Cultural Resource report BLM # CR-15-24 was conducted under Section 106 of the National historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended and its implementing regulations. No new sites or previously located sites are within the proposed project area. The proposed action is a **no effect**. There are **no historic properties that would be affected**.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973.

It is unlikely that the proposed action would move the species analyzed in this document and its populations toward listing under the ESA.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Neither the Proposed Action nor impacts associated with it violate any laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Signature of Authorized Official

/s/ Stephanie Odell
Field Manager

6/22/2015
Date

Decision Record

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management
Kremmling Field Office
2103 E. Park Ave, Kremmling, CO 80459

Alkali Well Pipeline Extension **DOI-BLM-CO-N02-2015-017-EA**

Decision

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action of extending a water pipeline (500-600 feet) from Alkali Well in Allotment #07018 to the adjacent allotment #07052, where two, ten foot Bul-Tuf tanks would be installed as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-N02-2015-017-EA.

Applicant Committed Design Features

15. The BLM would inspect disturbed areas for noxious weeds for two growing seasons after the project is completed. If noxious weeds are found, it would be the responsibility of the BLM to treat the weed infestations.
16. Weed free gravel would be used by the Permittee to deter any new populations of invasive or noxious plant species being established.
17. All construction equipment must be clean prior to entering the project area to prevent the spread of noxious or invasive species.
18. Specific design criteria of the project will be coordinated with the permittee and BLM personnel before project implementation. A recommended design will be given to the permittee as needed.
19. The BLM will reseed areas of disturbance with a BLM approved seed mix. Seed mix will be determined by BLM personnel at the time of seeding.
20. Construction would occur when clay soils are dry, and vehicles or equipment would not create ruts.
21. Troughs would be located on sandy loam soils and out of the drainage.
22. The topsoil and vegetation would be separated from underlying soils for re-spreading after construction. This would include the area or pad where the trough would be located. The soil surface over the buried pipeline should be left rough, to help prevent runoff from travelling the pipeline. Depending on the location and slope of the pipeline route, water bars should be constructed to keep runoff from travelling the pipeline route.

23. While in use, each internal combustion engine including tractors, trucks, or equivalents, welders, generators, stationary engines, or comparable powered equipment shall be provided with at least the following:
- a. One fire extinguisher, at least #ABC with an Underwriters Laboratory (UL) rating of 3A - 40BC, or greater. Extinguisher shall be mounted so as to be readily available for use (not locked in a tool box or chained to a seat, for example),
 - b. One shovel
 - c. One axe.
24. The project would be monitored by the Field Office Staff Archaeologist during construction.
25. The livestock troughs would be of neutral color to minimize visual contrast in the area.
26. All new troughs will have appropriate escape ramps installed before they are connected to water.
27. An overflow mechanism would release water approximately 150 feet from the infrastructure to create a saturated soil area where facultative wetland vegetation and insects can produce and small functional area for broods to visit at an adequate distance from the Proposed Action.
28. A minimum 300 meter radius survey would need to be performed by the KFO biologist to verify presence or absence of this species. In the event that North Park Phacelia is discovered, no surface disturbing activities would take place within a 300 meter buffer from the outer most plant location.

BLM Required Conditions of Approval to Mitigate Impacts to Cultural and Paleontological Resources

29. The applicant is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts.
30. If any archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, activity in the vicinity of the discovery will cease, and the BLM WRFO Archaeologist will be notified immediately. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The applicant will make every effort to protect the site from further impacts including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage until BLM determines a treatment approach, and the treatment is completed. Unless previously determined in treatment plans or agreements, BLM will evaluate the cultural resources and, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), select the appropriate mitigation option within 48 hours of the discovery. The applicant, under guidance of the BLM, will implement the mitigation in a timely manner. The process will

be fully documented in reports, site forms, maps, drawings, and photographs. The BLM will forward documentation to the SHPO for review and concurrence.

31. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the applicant must notify the AO, by telephone and written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), the operator must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the AO.
32. The applicant is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for disturbing or collecting vertebrate or other scientifically-important fossils, collecting large amounts of petrified wood (over 25lbs./day, up to 250lbs./year), or collecting fossils for commercial purposes on public lands.
33. If any paleontological resources are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the applicant or any of his agents must stop work immediately at that site, immediately contact the BLM Paleontology Coordinator, and make every effort to protect the site from further impacts, including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The BLM or designated paleontologist will evaluate the discovery and take action to protect or remove the resource within 10 working days. Within 10 days, the operator will be allowed to continue construction through the site, or will be given the choice of either (a) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for stabilizing the fossil resource in place and avoiding further disturbance to the fossil resource, or (b) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for mitigating impacts to the fossil resource prior to continuing construction through the project area.

Compliance with Laws & Conformance with the Land Use Plan

This decision is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. It is also in conformance with the Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP), and Record of Decision (ROD) approved December 19, 1984 and updated February 1999

Environmental Analysis and Finding of No Significant Impact

The Proposed Action was analyzed in DOI-BLM-N02-2015-0017-EA and it was found to have no significant impacts, thus an EIS is not required.

Public Involvement

This project was posted on the BLMs on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on the date of its signing.

Rationale

Analysis of the Proposed Action has concluded that there are no significant negative impacts and that it meets Colorado Standards for Public Land Health.

Administrative Remedies

Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4. Within 30 days of the decision, a Notice of Appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at Kremmling Field Office, 2103 E. Park Ave, Kremmling CO 80459 with copies sent to the Regional Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, 755 Parfet St., Suite 151, Lakewood, CO 80215, and to the Department of the Interior, Board of Land Appeals, 801 North Quincy St., MS300-QC, Arlington, VA, 22203. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals at the above address within 30 days after the Notice of Appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

Signature of Authorized Official

_____/s/ Stephanie Odell_____
Field Manager

____6/22/2015_____
Date